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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/C, INL/LP (BOZZOLO) AND WHA/CAR (BIDDEN)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ASEC JM KCRM PGOV SNAR
SUBJECT: JAMAICAN CRIME UPDATE

REF: A)KINGSTON 69 AND B)KINGSTON 71

1.(U) Summary: This is an action message. See paragraphs 10 and 12. The GOJ has made specific requests for USG assistance in tackling on-going efforts to quell violent crime. In January, a surge in violence shocked the Jamaican public and prompted the Commissioner of Police to warn of worse to come during months leading up to national elections this year. But, after an initial spate of violence, things appeared to cool off by the middle of February. The GOJ refined its anti-crime strategy. As the epicenter of violent crime seemed to have shifted from Kingston to Montego Bay, law enforcement operations focused on Montego Bay. End summary.

CRIME FIGURES

2.(U) According to figures supplied by Deputy Police Commissioner Mark Shields, the number of persons arrested and charged for criminal offenses in Jamaica between January 1st and February 18th was 1,894 in 2007, compared to 2,338 for the same period in 2006. However, murders committed during this period increased by 21% nation wide in 2007. While the greater Kingston area was at the same number of murders as last year (125), St. James Parish (Montego Bay) went from 18 murders for the period in 2006 to 31 in 2007, a 72% increase. Clarendon (a marijuana trafficking center) registered an increase of 111%, going from 9 murders in this period in 2006 to 19 in 2007. So far this year, six police officials were murdered. Comment: Murders overall in Jamaica decreased by 20% last year, compared to 2005. End Comment.

ANTI-CRIME STRATEGY

3.(U) On January 22, cabinet reportedly endorsed an anti-crime strategy put forth by Minister of National Security Peter Phillips. Phillips made the strategy public on January 29. He emphasized that it was not a new strategy; rather it was a plan for "staying the course." Basically, that meant applying what worked in Kingston elsewhere. It included the following:

- applying hot-spot policing (intense focus of resources) to trouble areas any where in Jamaica
- conducting joint operations using the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)
- establishing a permanent presence of Operation Kingfish on the Western end of the island
- expanding the Major Investigations Task Force to Western Jamaica

4.(U) But, Phillips did call for some new initiatives, as well. They were

- new legislation to allow DNA evidence to be collected from accused persons
- enactment of the Proceeds of Crime Act before the end of February
- legislation to provide stiffer penalties for persons trafficking in firearms
- legislation to establish a National Investigative Authority to deal with investigations of corruption in all areas of public life
- deploying marine vessels around the island and establishing three permanent marine police bases on the south coast to deal with arms smuggling
- a major recruitment drive to increase numbers and quality of JCF staff
- review the Police Service Regulations and the Book of Rules to expand legal powers to remove tainted JCF members
- strengthen operation of the newly created Police Civilian Oversight Authority and the anti-corruption unit within the JCF's Professional Standards Branch
- Upgrade technologies available to the JCF, including the police radio system and the 119 emergency hotline

5.(U) Following the Minister's lead, Commissioner of Police Lucius Thomas gave an address on January 31, in which he